



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
**WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF HEALTH**

*PO Box 47990 • Olympia, Washington 98504-7990*

January 11, 2006

**TO:** Washington State Board of Health Members

**FROM:** Craig McLaughlin, Executive Director

**SUBJECT: PREVIEW OF 2006 LEGISLATIVE SESSION**

**Background and Summary**

The purpose of this agenda item is to update the Board about the 2006 legislative session, a 60-day session that began January 9. It is intended to provide some context for the next agenda item, the proposed adoption of a Board Statement on Possible Legislative Issues for the 2006 session.

The Board heard a preliminary discussion of the 2006 session during its December meeting. The information provided in that briefing has held up fairly well, although much of it was, and remains, speculative. The most significant development since the last meeting was the December 20 release of Governor Christine Gregoire's proposed budget.

The discussion section of this memo describes some highlights of the Governor's budget and reviews the issues identified last month, plus a few that have arisen since. A few of these are rumored, but in many instances, specific bills are being drafted or have already been pre-filed. I have asked Brian Peyton, Director of the Department of Health (DOH) Office of Policy, Legislative, and Constituent Relations, to join me for this presentation.

**Recommended Board Action**

None.

**Discussion**

**Governor Gregoire's budget:** Governor Gregoire released her budget on December 20. This is a supplemental budget, so it focuses on proposed changes to the 2005–07 Biennial Budget. The state of Washington expects to receive about \$1.4 billion more in revenue during fiscal year 2006 than what was projected when the Legislature adopted the 2005–07 Biennial Budget. This is due to an improving economy, and in particular to a boom in housing prices. Unfortunately, this increased revenue will not be sufficient to cover the anticipated cost of providing current-level state services in 2007–09. The Governor proposes to spend about \$500 million on target investments, primarily in early learning, high school standards, energy assistance, emergency preparedness, and Puget Sound cleanup. The remaining \$900 million will be kept in reserve accounts.

There are several specific enhancements related to health:

- \$660,000 to local Women, Infant, and Children (WIC) programs, some of which are run by local health. Per client funding for nutritional services would increase from \$112 to \$116.
- \$100,000 to DOH for increased monitoring of influenza (pandemic flu preparedness).
- \$300,000 to DOH for public education about the need for personal preparedness.
- \$5 million to DOH for additional vaccine purchasing. This includes money for increased varicella uptake as a result of Board rule making.
- \$1.2 million to support centralized evidence-based purchasing of medical technologies and interventions.
- \$3.5 million to continue Medicaid look-alike coverage for immigrant children not eligible for Medicaid.
- \$1.5 million to create a new cabinet-level Department of Early Learning.
- \$42 million for an initiative to clean up Puget Sound that includes \$6.5 million for replacement of onsite sewage systems.
- \$943,000 to control persistent bioaccumulative toxins. \$528,000 will go primarily to Department of Ecology (ECY) to implement the chemical action plan for polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDEs), though some of it will support staff at DOH to deal with fish advisories. Another \$415,000 will help ECY implement the mercury action plan by forging agreements with dentists, hospitals, and auto recyclers.

**Policy issues:** Numerous issues that the Legislature may take up relate to the Board's work. Most were discussed in December and some are mentioned in the above discussion. They include:

- Greater regulation of sales of unpasteurized milk or a statewide ban.
- Pandemic flu preparedness (possible \$20 million proposal from WSAC).
- Requirements for onsite system (OSS) maintenance (People for Puget Sound/E2SHB 1458).
- Competitive food nutritional standards (Governor request).
- State Board of Education (SBOE) reconfiguration (physical education requirements).
- A ban on distributing sample tobacco products for free.
- Liability issues for cities, counties, and retired medical professional volunteers.
- Prohibitions on vaccines with thimerosal for children and pregnant women (two-year bill).
- Legislative mandates to require vaccines for school entry (meningococcal, pneumococcal).
- Implementing the recommendations of the Joint Select Committee on Health Disparities.
- Health insurance requirements for employers ("Play or Pay").
- State response to cuts in federal health funding, especially Medicaid funding.
- Incentives for implementing electronic medical records (pay for performance/Governor).
- Medical malpractice insurance and tort reform ("Plan B").
- Department of Agriculture authority for disposal of dead livestock (Ag request/Z-0761).
- DOH rule making for body piercing and body art (HB 2335).
- Encouraging a medical home for all children.
- Establishing a hepatitis C registry and public education campaign.
- Mandated benefits for prostate cancer screenings.
- Repealing the premium share for children (Governor request)